



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

JUN 22 2007

Office of the Chairman

Honorable Paul Condino
Chairman
Judiciary Committee
House of Representatives
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Dear Chairman Condino:

I understand that the Michigan House Judiciary Committee is considering two bills, House Bills (HBs) 4920 and 4921, which will strengthen Michigan's existing ignition interlock law and create a high blood alcohol concentration (BAC) law. The National Transportation Safety Board supports this legislation, which will reduce crashes, injuries, and deaths on Michigan's roads.

The Safety Board has recognized for many years that motor vehicle crashes are responsible for more fatalities than occur in all other transportation modes combined. More than 90 percent of all transportation-related deaths each year result from highway crashes; about 40 percent of these deaths nationwide are alcohol related. Alcohol-related fatalities increased from 16,694 in 2004 to 17,525 in 2005, and the number remains substantially higher than in 1999 (the year with the lowest alcohol-related fatalities on record), when approximately 15,790 people died in these crashes.

When the Safety Board examined the impaired driving problem in 2000, the Board found that hard core drinking drivers are disproportionately involved in alcohol-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities. In 2005, hard core drinking drivers were involved in more than half of alcohol-related fatalities. Similarly, in Michigan, more than 52 percent of alcohol-related fatalities involved a hard core drinking driver. The Board defines hard core drinking drivers as drivers who, at the time of arrest, have a BAC at or above 0.15 percent (high-BAC offender) or have been previously arrested for impaired driving within the last 10 years (repeat offender).

To reach a BAC of 0.15 percent, a person must consume a large amount of alcohol, more than what would be considered social drinking. The odds of arresting, let alone convicting, someone of impaired driving are so small that a repeat offender has likely driven impaired on many occasions before being arrested. Hard core drinking drivers also likely have an underlying alcohol problem. The Safety Board supports HBs 4920 and 4921 because these bills recognize that such unique offenders require comprehensive and creative solutions.



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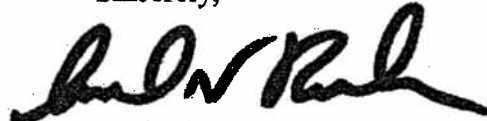
In particular, HB 4920 mandates that high-BAC offenders participate in and successfully complete one or more appropriate rehabilitative programs, already required for repeat offenders. The Safety Board encourages the use of alcohol treatment because research shows that offenders will continue their dangerous and criminal behavior, regardless of any criminal sanctions, unless the alcohol problem is addressed.

Ignition interlocks are a key component of any impaired driving countermeasure system; they are designed to prevent an impaired driver from operating a vehicle. These devices also include a variety of safeguards to reduce the chance that impaired drivers or other persons may defeat the interlock. Safeguards include breath temperature sensors and "rolling re-tests." Research has demonstrated that interlocks effectively reduce recidivism (repetitive alcohol-impaired driving) so long as the device remains on the vehicle. Further, interlocks provide mobility to offenders, allowing offenders to maintain important employment and personal contacts, which are critical for the success of those offenders who are seeking to address their alcohol problem.

According to many studies, use of interlocks is low and judges are not inclined to assign them. HBs 4920 and 4921 expand the mandatory use of ignition interlocks and offer an incentive for their use by reducing the length of the "hard" license suspension.

I hope that the committee will promptly approve HBs 4920 and 4921, thus helping to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured each year in traffic accidents on Michigan's roadways. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark V. Rosenker,
Chairman

cc: Honorable Daniel Acciavatti, Representative
Michigan House of Representatives

Honorable Marc Corriveau, Representative
Michigan House of Representatives

Mr. Gary G. Naeyaert
Naeyaert Advocacy Group